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Dear Mr Zanre,

Many thanks once more for attending and speaking at the Dacorum Environmental Forum meeting that took place in Hemel Hempstead on May 11th 2017. The topic was the Master Plan for LA3 at West Hemel, for which the Master Plan is now with the Dacorum Council and open for a brief period for objections from the public. We plan to respond to this.

At the meeting as you will recall, those present raised their concerns over a number of environmental matters, so we were encouraged to believe that some of this had been taken on board when we read an article in the Summer 2018 edition of the RSPB magazine 'Nature's Home'* that Barratt Developments was leading the field in a partnership with the RSPB to 'breathe wildlife into new housing' in the Kingsbrook development to the east of Aylesbury, and we still hope that it is not too late for some of these excellent measures to be incorporated into the local development LA3 in West Hemel Hempstead, in which you are partners. As the article in 'Nature's Home' was published after the DEF meeting that you attended we were unable to refer to it on that occasion.

In the article, The RSPB's Kingsbrook project manager commented that "We were clear from the start that wildlife-friendly features at Kingsbrook needed to be achievable in almost any development."

Measures included:

- Putting Swift bricks in every building (manufactured by Manthorpe)
- Planting hundreds of native trees, including a community orchard.
- Lining roads with new hedging, whilst preserving ancient hedges.
- Planting grass verges with native wildflowers
- Making small holes in the bottom of fences to make easy access for hedgehogs, frogs and newts.
- Planting the pools and channels of the planned sustainable drainage system with native vegetation.
- Installing wildlife corridors under main roads, bat friendly street lighting and amphibian friendly kerbing and.
- Inspiring new residents about these nature friendly measures by using a show home and garden

Another idea proposed by DEF, and similarly low cost, is to enhance water conservation by providing water butts in gardens.

As the innovations for the above measures have already been completed in preparation for the Kingsbrook development, it should be relatively easy to incorporate these inexpensively into any new Hemel developments. We were pleased to read that Ian Sadler, quoted in the article as managing director for the North Thames branch of Barratt, said of the Kingswood development. "This is absolutely the right thing to be doing. What has surprised us is many of the ideas have so much benefit at little or no extra cost."

Incorporating such ideas is particularly important in the case of the LA3 estate, as it is next to Shrubhill Common Nature reserve, so the development will need to provide a link between the reserve and the wider countryside. The current Planning Statement does say "Protect a wildlife corridor along the eastern side of the development adjoining Fields End." However, in the plans this wildlife corridor is not clearly indicated, and much narrower than expected. Dacorum Council's Borough Plan proposals in 1996 for it were much more generous, and ever since then there have been discussions between DBC, DEF and potential Developers concerning its width. Martin Hicks, the Senior Ecology officer at Herts County Council, has consistently advocated this "Chiltern Way" route along the eastern side of the development and has recently stated firmly that it should be at least 20 metres wide. The current plan does not appear to come near to complying with this. Of the other aspirations under the heading "Green Infrastructure Principles" none, quite rightly have been described as "Wildlife Corridor" since their main purpose would be recreational space, as we pointed out at our meeting in 2017.

We hope to work with you constructively on the proposed plans in the immediate future as they develop.

Yours sincerely,

Gruff Edwards

Chair, Dacorum Environmental Forum

* RSPB magazine 'Nature's Home' Summer 2018: article 'Neighbourhoods for Nature' p28-33